

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully acknowledge receipt of the Office Action mailed September 1, 2006.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 5, 6, and 11; rejected claims 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Coyette* (U.S. Patent No. 5,632,587); rejected claims 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Coyette*; rejected claims 2 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Coyette* in view of *Delfer et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,754,434); and objected to claim 7 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but allowable if rewritten in independent form.

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 1-6 and 8-11, and cancel claim 7, without prejudice or disclaimer. After entry of this Amendment, claims 1-6 and 8-11 will remain pending. Of these claims, claims 1, 9, and 10 are independent.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the amendments to claims 1-6 and 8-11. No new matter has been introduced.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claim 7. Consequently, Applicants have amended claims 1, 9, and 10 to include features of allowable claim 7, and have cancelled claim 7. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 9, and 10 are in condition for allowance. In addition, claims 2-6, 8, and 11 are in condition for allowance at least due to their corresponding dependence from independent claims 1 and 10.

Based on the foregoing amendments and the arguments, Applicants traverse the objections and rejections above and respectfully request reconsideration for at least the reasons that follow.

I. CLAIM OBJECTIONS

The Examiner's objection to claims 5, 6, and 11 has been rendered moot by the amendments made to claims 5, 6, and 11. Applicants therefore request that the objection to claims 5, 6, and 11 be withdrawn.

II. 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) REJECTION

Claims 9-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Coyette*. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Although Applicants do not necessarily agree with the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended claims 9 and 10 to include features of allowable claim 7. It is those features which the Examiner admits are not disclosed in either *Coyette*, *Delfer*, or any other prior art of record. (*Office Action*, p. 8, paragraph 20). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 9 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn.

Moreover, claim 11 is in condition for allowance at least due to its dependence from independent claim 10.

III. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) REJECTIONS

Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Coyette*; and claims 2 and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Coyette* in view of *Delfer*.

As stated above, although Applicants do not necessarily agree with the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include features of allowable claim 7. It is those features which the Examiner admits are not disclosed in either *Coyette, Delfer*, or any other prior art of record. (*Office Action*, p. 8, paragraph 20). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

Moreover, claims 2-6 and 8 are in condition for allowance at least due to their dependence from independent claim 1.

IV. CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 9, and 10 are in condition for allowance. In addition, claims 2-6, 8, and 11 are in condition for allowance at least due to their corresponding dependence from independent claims 1 and 10.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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